



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## CREDIT FOR QUALITY

---

That there is widespread interest in the rapidly increasing practice of granting varying credit based on quality of work is evidenced by the numerous communications which the *School Review* has received since the publication of Professor Ruediger's article in September, "Is Credit for Quality Sound?" Two of these are given below, one by Professor Meyer, of the University of Missouri, the other by Professor Hoblit, of the State College of New Mexico, whose article in the May number of the *Review*, "The School Unit; Quantity, Quality, and Credit," precipitated the discussion. To these is added a statement by Principal Johnson, of the University High School, Chicago, showing in detail the method of assigning credit in this school, which is typical of the practice employed in a considerable group of Illinois high schools.

---

### IS CREDIT FOR QUALITY SOUND?—A CRITICISM

---

MAX F. MEYER  
University of Missouri

---

Professor Ruediger was kind enough to call my attention to his article in the September, 1915, number of the *School Review*, "Is Credit for Quality Sound?" Although there are many statements in this article to which I would take exception, it hardly pays to debate them all because they seem to rest on a fundamental difference of temperament and attitude toward life, so that at the end of the debate neither party would be likely to have convinced the other. On two points, however, I should like to record and try to justify my difference of opinion.

First, Professor Ruediger emphasizes, quite correctly (p. 453), the fact that the principle of varying the credit with the quality of the work could not be applied to the curriculum of an engineering school or other professional school with the effect of excusing the

student from any of the required (non-elective) courses. He adds: "And should this not be true of general culture schools?" He takes it almost for granted that the answer to this question can be only "Yes." My answer is emphatically "No." It is undeniable that a medical school would invite disaster if it should excuse a student from anatomy because he has done good work in physiology and other required sciences. But I cannot believe that many will share Professor Ruediger's horror at the sight of a college Bachelor who has "missed the studies of sociology, geology, astronomy, biblical literature, and the problems and history of philosophy," supposedly, because in other studies he has received credit for quality, and, supposedly, remaining now for all his life completely ignorant of anything he might have learned in the courses going under these names. There are many high-class colleges in the United States where a student would experience no difficulty in graduating in spite of having missed these five courses of formal instruction. Who is the authority establishing the rule that these or any other special courses, taken at the feet of a college teacher, are a *sine qua non* of general culture? And if they were, what relation would the question of credit for quality have to such a fact as that of a certain course being required? Not all the schools of the University of Missouri, for example, vary the credit with the quality of the work. But those that do, do not in consequence excuse any student from any course specifically required. I believe that Professor Ruediger reasons about the principle in question without sufficient actual experience with its administration.

Professor Ruediger favors the practice of allowing an able student to take eighteen or twenty hours of work. (In Missouri the college student is restricted to sixteen, and the dean feels greatly relieved because he need not listen to the pleas of the students who want to take more.) But Professor Ruediger is mistaken if he thinks that in consequence of this restriction the student misses information which he ought to obtain. Does the brilliant student, eager to learn, spend his time in idleness whenever he is not sitting in the classroom or reading his assignments? Is there no library for his free choice? Further, his being restricted to sixteen hours for credit does not preclude his attending, without

recorded credit, any teacher's class if he thinks that such attendance would benefit him. But—and this is the crucial point—the bright student is not forced to choose, among the courses that happen to be offered, twenty hours no matter whether he cares for those offered or not. He can get additional credit by doing good work in fewer courses and then, in addition, is free to make his own choice between sitting at a teacher's feet and sitting at the library table. Summing up: No sane person who favored credit varying with the quality of the work ever proposed that this should lead to excusing the student from any specifically required study; or to preventing a faculty from requiring supplementary work in the same subject of a student weak in that subject. Professor Ruediger says himself (p. 454): "It bears no relation to credit for quality." Exactly so. But why, then, does he bring it in?

The second point which I wish to discuss is the quotation of the words "empty honor" from the catalogue of the University of Missouri. Professor Ruediger, being unfamiliar with the inner history of the University of Missouri, has entirely misunderstood the meaning of these words. Formerly, each division of the University awarded to one student the honor of valedictorian of the graduating class. This particular honor used to be ridiculed by the students as an empty honor and was abolished by those divisions which introduced credit for quality. It has never occurred to any faculty member to think, as Professor Ruediger supposes, of scholarships and fellowships, promotions into the faculty, recommendations or other positions, and the like, as empty honors. If so, the faculties of the divisions would have had to abolish these too. These are indeed not *empty* bubbles, but realities highly appreciated. Moreover, they are not primarily *honors* at all, empty or abundant. It may be an honor to be President of the United States, but it is primarily only a position of service. The people do not elect a man in order to honor him, but in order to secure his services. Scholarships are given to students, not in order to honor them, but to enable them to serve society. The honor is quite secondary. An employer chooses the most intelligent one of several applicants for a position. The faculty welcomes within its ranks its brightest students. How could this be otherwise when it is a question of

future service? All this has no essential relation to the award of honors or to credit for quality either. Why then bring it in?

Seven years ago, when one of the divisions of the University of Missouri first introduced varying credit, I made up my mind to watch carefully its effect, good and evil, on university life and to make public my observations in an unbiased report telling it all. The article intended has never been published. It will never be published for the simple reason that during these seven years nothing has happened that is worth saying. Students come and go, as they used to. Some use their opportunities wisely, some waste them, as formerly. Some try to improve themselves, others merely hunt for grades, as before. Teachers, too, are the same kind. Some "grasp the theory of motivation," others use "vicious artificial incentives." There is no difference between now and ten years ago. I have also asked those of my colleagues who were here, not only during these seven years, but also during seven years before. There is not one who would swear that a difference was obvious. The only ones that fancy a difference are those who were not here previously. I am thoroughly disillusioned. It is a small matter whether you exchange one for the other, constant credit and credit varying with the quality of the work. It is a mere ripple on the ocean of school life. One of my colleagues, after listening to a speech denouncing the principle of credit for quality because of its resulting evils, said: "These evils must be truly unspeakable; for after talking for half an hour the speaker has not told us yet what they really are."

If it makes any difference whether a school gives constant credit or varies the credit with the quality, difference must be looked for in the direction indicated by the following experience. When teachers line up for or against varying credit, in general (exceptions notwithstanding) those are for it who wish to give the student as much freedom as possible to work out his own salvation under guidance, but not under force; and those are against it who believe that the more fixed the curriculum the better for the student. Credit for quality makes the student the more independent of the faculty in the selection of his courses and his methods of obtaining information, the brighter he is. That is the crux of the matter.

## IS CREDIT FOR QUALITY SOUND?—A REJOINDER

---

MERRITT L. HOBLIT  
State College, New Mexico

---

The question as to the soundness of credit for quality, discussed in the September, 1915, issue of the *School Review* by W. C. Ruediger, seems to call for a rejoinder from me, since Mr. Ruediger's criticism of such credit was provoked by my article upon the high-school unit in the May issue. Especially do I feel called upon to answer because of the fact that Mr. Ruediger seems gravely to have misapprehended the scheme of credit outlined in my article. He says: "The fourth objection to credit for quality is the most serious of all. Such credit varies the educational content covered by the different students, and yet this variable content is indicated by the same diploma or degree." And he goes on to illustrate by supposing the case of a school in which 60 units are required for graduation; that this requirement, however, may be reduced in the case of bright students by granting extra credit, and increased in the case of dull students by decreasing the credit allowed for each class-unit, the net result being that the dull student might be required to cover as much as 50 per cent more ground than the bright student, while the latter, by reason of his brilliance in part of the required course of study, might be graduated with a shortage of as much as 10 units of the usual requirement for graduation.

Now a careful reading of my first article will show that there was no suggestion that high-grade work should result in a change in the content of the course, either by abbreviation or by elimination of any part of the prescribed work. The bright student must do the work that is required of the average student, but he may by virtue of his superior ability perform the work in less time. The abbreviation of his course will be, not as regards content, but as regards time. But the dull student, also obliged to do the work required of the average student, will have to do such additional work in the several prescribed courses, or in other courses, as will win for him the requisite number of credit-points to bring his total credit to a parity with that of the average student at least.

The difference between this and the case supposed by Mr. Ruediger will be apparent from an example. Suppose that a certain high school requires 15 units for graduation; that each unit is given, for purposes of qualitative credit, an arbitrary quantitative valuation of 200 points; and that each student who graduates *must cover all the ground of these 15 units* and win a minimum qualitative credit in the whole course of 2,400 points. This means that he must win an average of 160 points, or grade C, in each unit of his work; and, allowing for possible failure in parts of his work, by covering the ground of 4 units each year he will finish his course in four years. Suppose now a student to be strong enough to carry 5 units each year. Then he can, by winning not fewer than 160 points in each unit, finish in three years. But a student who is so weak as to be able to maintain an average of only 140 points, or grade D, in each unit will require at least four and a half years to complete a course of 15 units and do the extra work necessary to satisfy a reasonable standard of passableness.

This scheme, therefore, does not propose that quality shall make up for quantity, but only that if a student offers the minimum quantity, the quality of his work must not in any part fall below grade D, and in the aggregate must be kept up to C, the average grade. It may be expected, therefore, that there will be normally a concomitant variation of quantity and quality, but not so operating as to cut out anything essential. To the able student two courses are open: a maximum amount of work each year, with some sacrifice of quality and gain of time; or the normal amount of work each year, with increase of quality and lengthening of the time taken to complete the course. The weak student, by minimizing the amount of work undertaken each year, may increase the quality, but will normally need to take more time to complete his course.

In such a scheme, quantitative credit according to quality is not "an unrelated bonus," but is a vitally important index to determine the amount of time and application that the student must give in order to meet the requirements of any specific course of study. And with such a program of credit for quality in mind it is clear that most of Mr. Ruediger's criticism is irrelevant.

The question is asked: Why stop the awarding of credit at D with 70 per cent? For the reason that 70 per cent has long been regarded in many schools as the minimum passing-grade. In the scheme criticized, however, grade D and 70 per cent mean that the pupil who makes that grade has passed in the subject and is given a credit of 70 points toward the 2,400 that he must make for graduation in a 15-unit high-school course. If his work is of a poorer quality, he may have gained something, it is true, but it would manifestly be disastrous to both discipline and scholarship if the school should give fractional credit indefinitely.

It may be admitted that we are already giving credit for quality. But the credit that must be won and the manner of winning it are not ordinarily defined in such a way as to incite the laggard student to better work, whatever may be said as to the effect of honors that are reserved for the good student. And this brings me to the last point which I will notice—"the vicious artificial incentive" which is said to be introduced by credit for quality.

The scheme which I propose, as has been shown, does not contemplate "extra credit" in the sense in which my critic understands that term. The normal required course leading to graduation is not weighted with extra credit to the good student so as to decrease in any way its content. But the path of the laggard is hedged with restrictions which make it impossible for him to finish a course with low-grade work in the same time and with the same grade of diploma as the student who does high-grade work. He learns in his school experience something quite definite as to the meaning and operation of a principle which is really alive outside of school—that quality is vitally important and really does count as a determining factor in the appraisal and reward of all human achievement. If, then, it be granted that the awarding of credit in school according to quality does constitute an artificial incentive, or even a "vicious" one, it would seem to be justified on the ground that it accustoms the student to conditions which he will have to meet as soon as he closes the schoolhouse door behind him.



## CREDIT FOR COURSES IN THE UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL

---

FRANKLIN W. JOHNSON  
The University High School

---

The operation of the system of varying credits employed in the University High School can be understood only when examined in connection with the requirements for graduation. These are as follows:

The following groups of courses are offered:

- Group I. English
- Group II. Foreign Language  
     a) Latin  
     b) Greek  
     c) French  
     d) German
- Group III. Mathematics
- Group IV. History
- Group V. Science
- Group VI. a) Shopwork  
           b) Drawing and Design  
           c) Domestic Science  
           d) Household Art
- Group VII. Music
- Group VIII. Physical Training and Hygiene

## REQUIREMENTS FOR GRADUATION

For graduation 16 units are required, of which 9 are specifically required and 7 are elective.

*Specific requirements.*—The 9 units specifically required are as follows:

	Units
English.....	3
Foreign Language.....	1
Mathematics.....	1
History.....	1
Science.....	1
Group VI.....	1
Physical Training and Hygiene.....	1
Total.....	<hr/> 9

*Elective courses.*—The 7 elective units must be selected in compliance with the following requirements:

1. In addition to the requirement in English, there must be offered from Groups II–VI one major sequence of 3 units from one group, and two minor sequences of 2 units each from two other groups.
2. Two sequences may be offered from Group II, but from no other group.
3. Not more than one unit each may be offered from Groups VII and VIII.

Credit for courses is assigned according to the following plan: The passing-grade is 60. Grades are given only in multiples of five from 60 to 100. The amount of credit assigned for a course varies with the number of hours and with the grade received. For such courses as drawing, design, and shopwork, in which no preparation outside the classroom is required, one-half the amount of credit is given for the same number of hours as in other courses. In courses with daily recitations requiring preparation, credit for one year is given as follows:

	Units
A+ (95).....	1.25
A (90).....	1.20
B+ (85).....	1.15
B (80).....	1.10
C+ (75).....	1.00
C (70).....	0.95
D+ (65).....	0.90
D (60).....	0.85

For semester courses, for courses with less than five recitations per week, and for courses in subjects not requiring preparation, a proportionate amount of credit is given.

The following limitations have been fixed in determining the amount of credit given:

1. Pupils who receive extra credit may not take work in excess of 4 units on a basis of C+ (75) grade, physical training excepted.
2. Pupils may take a maximum of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  units reckoned on a basis of C+ (75) grade in case the excess over 4 units is for subjects in Group VI, or debating, dramatics, or music. But no extra credit may be received for high grades.
3. Pupils taking work in excess of 4 units on a basis of C+ (75) grade will receive penalty for low grades.
4. Pupils will be allowed to take work in excess of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  units on a basis of C+ (75) grade only when the average grade of the previous semester has been B, except by special vote of the faculty.

5. The total excess credit shall not be more than double the amount earned in the last half of the course.

This plan is devised to meet two distinct aims. It aims first to offer a substantial reward, open on equal terms to all, for work of a quality above what has been found in practice to be the median standard of the school, as well as a corresponding penalty for work falling below this standard. It will be noted that for work of exceptionally high grade a pupil taking four subjects may secure credit for 5 units in one year. With the one unit in physical training and hygiene, required of all, which it will be noted in limitation 1 may be taken in addition to the four subjects, such a pupil may complete the requirements for graduation in three years. It should be carefully observed that for graduation such a pupil must have completed two major sequences of 3 units each in two groups and two minor sequences of 2 units each in two other groups, beside the minimum of 1 unit each in the two remaining groups. Such a course, completed with a very high degree of excellence, meeting the important demands of breadth and sequence, can be defended from every reasonable standpoint.

The other aim has been to limit the growing tendency to take an excessive number of courses which has greatly lowered the efficiency of high-school classroom achievement in respect to both the quantity and the quality of work accomplished. It is not unusual to find pupils carrying five, six, or even more, unit courses, and a critical study of the situation reveals the fact that these pupils are quite as likely to be those whose past record is poor as those of superior attainments. It is doubtless possible and desirable for some pupils to accomplish more than the normal amount of work. The foregoing plan makes this a privilege to be secured as one of the tangible rewards of excellence in previous work. Limitation 4 provides for exceptions to the number of courses allowed a pupil. Only one pupil this year has been allowed to exceed this limit by special vote of the faculty.

Varying credit has been given in the University High School for four years. In this time no pupil has, by reason of this method, been graduated in three years. Several have secured as many as 20 units in four years. It is easy to draw conclusions which have

not been subjected to scientific testing. It is certainly true that good scholarship is in higher esteem among the pupils of the school. Rewards open to all on even terms place distinctions for scholarship on a much higher social plane than has generally prevailed where such rewards have been few, often artificial, and not infrequently open to question, by pupils and teachers, as to whether they have fallen where deserved.

With the growing recognition of the unity of the work of the upper years of the high school and the earlier years of the college, it seems certain that we shall soon have an opportunity to make still more tangible the rewards for excellence of work, as well as to test the validity of this new practice, at least from the standpoint of efficiency. The University of Chicago is now making an experimental test by admitting pupils from a few schools on this basis of credit. Few, if any, will doubt that a pupil with less than the normal number of units for work of high grade is as competent to do college work as another pupil with a considerably larger number of units secured at the lowest possible grade. Graduates of the University High School will soon present claims for advanced standing at the University on the basis of units secured in excess of those usually given for the same number of courses. We shall wait, with interest, to see if their college records justify this action. While college records do not offer the only, or, perhaps, the best, test of school practice, it is fair to assume that efficient habits of work and a desire for high achievement provide an excellent basis for success anywhere.